

Palestine: Resistance against Occupation, Colonialism and Apartheid

Interview with Hatem Abudayyeh

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Hatem Abudayyeh, an Arab leader in the United States, speaks out on the Question of Palestine. An American son of Palestinians, Hatem is Executive Director of Arab American Action Network (AAAN), and co-founder and national coordinating committee member of the [U.S. Palestinian Community Network \(USPCN\)](#).

Edu Montesanti: How do you see the meeting between President Donald Trump and Prime-Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 15, especially the following observations by the American president: "I'm looking at two-state and one-state" formulations, Mr. Trump said during a White House news conference with Mr. Netanyahu. "I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one that both parties like. I can live with either one"?

Hatem Abudayyeh: Half of what Trump says is based on a lack of knowledge and understanding of domestic or foreign policy. He says the first thing that comes into his head with no regard for precedent or ramifications. He wants to run the U.S. like he runs his businesses and his relationships with women, like an autocrat. But the other half of what he says is based on an ultra-right wing worldview, so this could be that.

This sounds like he wants to help Israel achieve the *Ersatz* (Greater) Israel dream of the most fascist and rabid of Zionists, not the one state solution that most progressive Palestinians like we in the U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN) would want.

Edu Montesanti: Why cannot Israel and the Palestinians decide alone the question? Why do Palestinians need a third party to get an agreement?

Hatem Abudayyeh: The Palestinian question is not only one that affects us and the settler-colonialist Europeans who live on our land, but the entire region of the Arab World and the Middle East. So it's a global question that does not necessarily need only a third party, but many parties.

We know clearly that the U.S. is not an honest broker and has never been one, so we have absolutely no interest in Trump or his ideas, even if he has invited Palestinian Authority **President Mahmoud Abbas** to the White House.

The Israelis will not accept any political or diplomatic pressure, so the pressure must instead come from the Palestinian resistance, in all its forms.

Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) has become an international phenomenon, even in the U.S., and Palestinians inside the borders of historic Palestine, including those who live inside the 1948 territories, must continue organizing and struggling to put pressure on the racist Israeli regime.

Edu Montesanti: *The passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 voted on December 23 last year, condemning the Israeli settlements as a flagrant violation of international law and a major impediment to the achievement of a two-state solution, changes nothing on the ground between Israel and the Palestinians. UN member states “agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council” according to the UN Charter. Human rights and the international community also condemns the Israeli settlements and military attacks against Palestinians. As journalist Daoud Kuttub observed last month in Al-Jazeera, in the article [US and Israel join forces to bury Palestinian statehood](#): “Ever since the 1967 occupation, the United Nations Security Council has repeatedly expressed the illegality of the occupation, as in the preamble of Resolution 242 “emphasizing inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.” Why does nothing change year by year, massacre after massacre?*

Hatem Abudayyeh: Nothing changes because of the U.S., which uses and needs Israel as its proxy state in the Arab World. Many people misrepresent the conflict and believe that the Zionists dictate U.S. foreign policy, whether those Zionists are in Israel, Europe, the U.S., or even the Arab World. But in reality, **it is U.S. imperialism that unequivocally supports Israel diplomatically, politically, militarily, and financially**, because the U.S. needs Israel to safeguard its economic interests in the Arab World.

The U.S. knows that the Arab masses will not stay silent, and will rise up to overthrow dictators like they did in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen in 2011. The white, settler-colonialist state of Israel provides the U.S. security that Arab states (regardless of how corrupt and autocratic they are) cannot.

So it is U.S. policy that allows Israel to continue to violate the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, the Right of Return, and independence.

Edu Montesanti: *You know the Western media distorts the facts involving this massacre against Palestinians. Please number the crimes or at least some of them committed by Israel.*

Hatem Abudayyeh: Collective punishment, home demolitions, expropriation of land, administrative detention, settler violence and killings, military violence and killing, racist legislative and judicial decisions inside Israel affecting 1948 Palestinians, and many others.

Edu Montesanti: *How do you evaluate the Western media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?*

Hatem Abudayyeh: Ultimately, the media is the tool of the government in the U.S. and other Western countries. As I stated above, the U.S. needs Israel to safeguard its interests in the Arab World and Middle East, so its media coverage of the conflict must reflect almost unequivocal support of Israel as well.

That is why there is no balance in the Western media coverage, and why independent media is so important in this day and age.

Edu Montesanti: *Would you please comment a little more about the Zionist lobby in US politics? And comment please how it interferes in the peace process in the Question of Palestine.*

Hatem Abudayyeh: The Zionist lobby is powerful, we acknowledge, but it is not the ultimate determinant of U.S. foreign policy. It has money and political capital, of course, and definitely pushes Israeli propaganda in the U.S. Congress and across the country, but even if it were non-existent, the U.S. government would still support Israel the way it does currently.

Edu Montesanti: *Professor Avi Shlaim [observed](#) weeks ago, in Al-Jazeera: "Sadly, the Palestinians are handicapped by weak leadership and by the internal rivalry between Fatah and Hamas." Your view on the internal politics among Palestinians, please.*

Hatem Abudayyeh: The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank became a comprador years ago, and the cabal around PA President Mahmoud Abbas will continue to work with the enemy to repress Palestinian resistance.

There are many elements of Fatah that are patriotic and want to resist Israel, but ultimately, they never truly challenge the PA. Hamas, on the other hand, has recently played the most leading role in the military resistance against Israel, so its popularity has risen accordingly over the years.

But it is also guilty of some repression against non-Hamas Palestinian forces in Gaza, and it has not been able to administer the Gaza Strip in a way that makes people's lives better, but this is mostly due to the Israeli and Egyptian siege on the tiny piece of land.

The vast majority of Palestinians want peace and justice, and know that can only happen if we continue our resistance against the oppressor.

The best way for that to happen is to give up on the notion that we are in a "state building" stage of our revolution. We are not. We are still in the national liberation stage, so it doesn't matter who the president of the PA is, or even that there are two PAs right now, one in the West Bank and one in Gaza.

What needs to happen is for true national unity that includes not only Fatah and Hamas, but all the other Palestinian political parties and forces as well. The Palestinian victory against Israel in 2014 [was won](#) because the resistance was unified, and only political unity can win freedom and independence.

We need a re-formed PLO that does not make concessions to Israel and the U.S., and that truly represents all the resistance forces and social sectors of Palestinian society.

Edu Montesanti: *What could we expect from Arab leaders from now on?*

Hatem Abudayyeh: Most Arab leaders in the Arab World are corrupt tools of the U.S., and by extension, Israel. These leaders will do nothing to challenge the status quo, and only care about keeping themselves in power.

On the other hand, the Arab masses can and will make a difference, by winning their own independence in their own countries, and then providing leadership that supports the Palestinian people in our struggle for freedom.

Edu Montesanti: *What is the solution to the conflict? What are the principal obstacles to a fair agreement and solutions?*

Hatem Abudayyeh: The solution is a simple one. We do not accept the notion of a racist, white, settler-colonialist state, like the one in South Africa during the Apartheid regime there.

Israel is a racist state, and so it must be dismantled like Apartheid South Africa was. If this happens, and if Palestinian refugees are able to return to their homes and lands inside historic Palestine, and if the military occupation is defeated and ended, then all the people can live together in one, single state.

This is the only solution, because Palestinian refugees will never give up their Right of Return, and Israel will eventually be forced to end its occupation and oppression of Palestinians in the 1948 territories, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

When the racist structures of Zionist Israel are dismantled, then there can be equality for all people living there. And this **will** happen as long as the international community continues to organize BDS campaigns, the people of the U.S. continue to strike blows against U.S. imperialism the way they have been in the anti-Trump movement, and the Palestinians continue their legitimate resistance against occupation, colonialism, and *apartheid*.

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